

Latin Level 9

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

GUARDIANS OF THE WASHINGTON ASYLUM,

BY

Thomas Henderson
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PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN WASHINGTON.

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To the Guardians of the Washington Asylum :

GENTLEMEN : You have had the goodness to receive and consider several communications from me. I have thought proper to address the accompanying statement to you. I have published it, that I might do justice to myself, and lay before you and the City Councils certain facts as to the relations between the Alms House and Hospitals and the Medical Schools throughout this country.

To these facts you will give that consideration they merit.

I sincerely hope the views they enforce may tend to secure the laudable object of my exertions, and I thank you, gentlemen, for the liberal construction you have placed on my course in this business.

I have the honor to be, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS HENDERSON

August 14, 1827.

ADDRESS.

IT is due to those who have approved the ground on which an application has been made to allow the Professor of the Practice of Medicine to attend, *gratuitously*, the Alms House in this City, to make this statement. The obligation extends, likewise, to those who disapprove of it; for correct information may do away their objections; and, it is hoped, the liberality and propriety of the offer will be soon admitted by all.

It is especially my duty to present this explanation, as my conduct and motives have been hastily and harshly condemned, under an ignorance of the real state of the case.

It may, in the first place, be proper to state, that the Medical College of Washington has, by the energetic agency of the Professors, and the liberal sentiments of the Citizens, attained a position which, for firmness and prospect of success, has not often been equalled, and it is believed never exceeded, in the same time, in this country. The Professors have expended between eight and ten thousand dollars in a building, apparatus, and other arrangements, for prosecuting the great and useful object

they have in view. They have delivered three courses of lectures to classes, in numbers and intelligence equal, if not exceeding, reasonable expectation; and they have every prospect that an increasing strength of professional and general respect, will encourage their future arduous duties.

This respect was manifested by a large majority of the Physicians of the District in their memorial to Congress, where they deprecate the incorporation of a second Medical College in this City. In this sentiment, the Physicians were supported by the expressed wishes of a numerous and most respectable class of citizens. The memorial alluded to is attached to this pamphlet; and it may be observed, that, by recent arrangements in the chair of Chemistry, the school has concentrated much good feeling in and out of the profession; which feeling, it will be as well a duty as pleasure to confirm.

By thus securing the respect of the citizens and physicians, the Medical College fairly stands before the community, as an institution worthy of the patronage usually granted to such in all cities in this or other countries. It is on this ground that a request was made to the Guardians of the Poor, which has excited much attention, and which continues to agitate the City Councils. This request was made by me, and, by doing so, I have been subjected to the freedom of legislative discussion, without expecting or desiring it; and am now urged, by the strongest considerations, to submit the following statement:

Two years since an application was made to the Guardians of the Asylum to allow the Professors to deliver Clinical Lectures at that institution, under the direction of Dr. McWilliams, the physician to the House; and to this request it was added, that a fee should be paid to the House by every student attending the lectures. The situation of the

Medical College has been such as to render it inexpedient to attach the fee, inasmuch as the accommodations of the students in the public lecture rooms were not such as the Professors intended ; and because the residence of the Professor of the Practice of Medicine, was so remote as to render it impossible for him to undertake the winter practice of the House, and to lecture daily at the College.

It became necessary for me, holding that station, to do an act of justice to the College and to myself. I should either remove to Washington, where I could attend to all my duties as a Professor, or to make room for some one who could do so ; and it was necessary for my private professional prosperity to reside where I lectured, inasmuch as I could not attend to my duties in Washington while my residence was in Georgetown. I decided on removing to Washington, where I had enjoyed a limited but highly respectable practice for more than ten years. This personal narrative will be pardoned, as it is intended to meet an objection that I am a stranger of recent introduction and pretensions, in the medical circle of Washington.

About a month after my removal, the period for the annual election of the Physician to the Alms House occurred, and led to my offers to the Guardians. Before these propositions were submitted, I had carefully informed myself as to the relations between every Medical College and Alms House, or Hospital, in the United States, where reciprocal benefits could be extended, and the result confirmed the propriety of my course. The facts, it may be most proper to submit here.

A prominent consideration is this : that *there is no Hospital or Alms House in this country in which, if convenience of location will allow Medical Students to see the practice, or the Professors in the School to attend it, a fee is paid to a Medical Attendant.*

If I am wrong in this position, the error will be readily acknowledged. To confirm it, let a brief review be made of the Medical Schools in our country.

In Philadelphia, where the first Medical College was organized, the Hospital practice was given for the benefit of the School. It was continued until a few years since, when, the Alms House being a larger clinical house, it was applied for by the Professors; and after a contest with some of the Physicians of the city, they were established in it, *as gratuitous Physicians and Surgeons*, bound by the strictest regulations. The Medical Students pay a fee for the privilege of seeing the practice.*

In New York, on the opening of the Medical College there, the Professors were invited and chosen to attend the Hospital. They continue to do so. The Alms House is in the country, beyond the reach of the School.

In Boston, on an appeal from two of the Medical Professors, the community and corporation commenced an institution, which has eventuated in a noble Hospital. The Professors attend it; the Students of Practical Medicine and Surgery are admitted gratuitously. No fees paid to the medical attendants. Here the Alms House is in the country, beyond the reach of the school.

In Baltimore, in consequence of the remoteness of both Alms House and Hospital from the city, the citizens have created and support an Infirmary, for the express purpose of affording facility to the Medical School. The Professors attend it, without fee.

In Cincinnati, the Hospital endowed by the State, is under the medical attention of the Professors of their school; they are, *ex officio*, the medical officers of the House.

* I am informed that to be eligible now to practise in the Hospital in Philadelphia, a contribution of thirty dollars is required.

In Charleston, South Carolina, the Professors are allowed the practice in two of the City Hospitals.

In Lexington, Kentucky, there is every facility afforded to the Medical Department of Transylvania University.

With a view of these facts, with a full conviction of the propriety of the step, I considered that an approach should, circumspectly and delicately, be made to the Guardians of our Asylum.

I waited on Mr. Goldsborough to ascertain the mode by which I should communicate with them ; and he promptly advised me to see the Guardians, then in session. I determined before doing so, to have an interview with the Physician of the Alms House. I freely stated to him my object, which was to have the privilege of attending the house during the Winter, under *the direction of the Guardians* ; and frankly urged the objections to serving under *his* direction or that of any *individual*. He was told, that it would be unbecoming my station as a public teacher : that circumstances might arise, which would induce him to dispense with my services, or embarrass my duties during the Winter : that it could in nowise affect his standing, to have me elevated to a respectable station as a medical officer of the House, for that I would under no circumstances touch the salary : that I would, if he pleased, do all the duties, and give him the income : that I would submit to any labor or inconvenience in order to have the unpleasant restriction removed, viz : that of being under *his direction* : that he might select three of his friends, before whom I would pledge myself to take no steps to weaken, but the rather to strengthen his claims to the income. I did not doubt that the Guardians satisfied with the faithful performance of the duties, would not think it worth their consideration to inquire who receives the emolument. In fine, I wished Dr. M'Williams to take

the honorable station of *consulting Physician*, with the salary, while I undertook the duties of attending Physician. Such is the usage elsewhere, as to the *grades* of medical officers, and such I have no doubt would have been advantageous to the Washington Asylum. The reply I received was this : “you will be pleased to make your own propositions to the Guardians ; I will neither approve nor *disapprove* of them ; yet, can but consider any interference with me in this institution, in the same light as interference with my private practice.” I believe he did disapprove of my offers.

No sooner had the Guardians received my first letter, than at a glance they saw that their business could be done gratuitously ; and it was *their inference*, together with the refusal of Dr. M’Williams to attend in any way to my proposals, that induced me to offer to attend the House without fee. If it had not been elicited by the quick-sighted apprehension of the Guardians, and if I had not been advised to submit the proposition plainly, great reluctance, on my part, would have arisen to making the *gratuitous* offer. This reluctance arose from respect to Dr. M’Williams, and operated against a knowledge of the usages elsewhere as well as the reason of the case.

The medical expenses of the Alms House are :

For the Physician’s fee, - - - \$ 200

accommodation of the Student, board, &c. 120

It is believed to be a fair estimate, to say, that the board and accommodation of the student is worth \$120. In other Alms Houses it is rated higher.

I offered to attend the House gratuitously ; to superintend the education of the student ; to make a donation of a small but valuable medical library ; to secure a fee from the students of our College. With these advantages, it is not a moment to be doubted, that instead of furnishing

board, &c. to the student, one would pay to secure the situation of resident student ; for he would, in doing so, pay no more than the usual fee to the private practitioner for his tuition, and enjoy great practical advantages. I believe that fee to average about \$ 100 a year. I offered as a further inducement for a young man to pay for his board, to attach to the situation of resident student, the privilege of attending my public lectures gratuitously. By this arrangement, it will be observed, that instead of paying \$ 300 a year for medical services, the Asylum would be in the receipt of \$ 100 a year ; making a difference of \$ 400 a year in their funds.

A yet more important consideration is to be had. The Professors will require the students to attend clinical practice before they graduate. Now it is certain that from this quarter, little short of \$ 100 a winter will be received. It is believed that much more will be contributed, particularly when the Alms House library is enlarged, so as to make it an object for students to purchase access to it. So that the employment of the Professors in the Alms House, will, all usage, reason, and liberality aside, save that institution \$ 500 a year ; that is one-seventh of the whole expense attending it.

It has been thought indelicate in me, to offer any thing which would hazard the pecuniary interests of the Physician to the Alms House. It would have been so, if I had been influenced by pecuniary considerations. I would scorn to underbid him ; and this, I think, he knows. But a public and *charitable institution, an asylum for the poor*, is a fair object, towards which the friendly exertions of any member of the community, not only *may*, but *ought* to be directed. Especially is the Medical Department free to the honorable competition of the profession. It is not and never will be tolerated in such an age, and such a commu-

nity as this, that any physician has not a right to offer to relieve the burden, and enlarge the sphere, of charitable exertion. There is a way of doing so, which never should be lost sight of; that I have pursued this way, that I have done no violence to personal or professional delicacy, I affirm with confidence and truth.

If the right, nay, the duty thus bears on the profession at large, *a fortiori*, they operate on me. For I act in this business solely with a view to public good. He who ascribes to me any thing of a private or interested character, thinks uncharitably, and speaks untruly. I follow the example of all the teachers of medicine in this or any other country. I ask only that which will reflect honor on those who grant it, and benefit on the profession of medicine. I ascribe no improper motive to the Physician to the Alms House; but I say fearlessly, that every other Professor of practical medicine would do as I have done; for it would have been his duty and privilege to do so.

I shall not notice many of the objections which have been created against my propositions; many, most, nearly all of them, are unworthy of notice. One, however, should be attended to, viz: that I wished to attend the House throughout the year, to the exclusion of the profession generally. There is not a shadow of truth in the statement. If it be necessary, to secure it for the winter, I am willing to do the duties all the year round. But if others desire to attend it gratuitously, there are eight months of the year, to which I can have no claim. It is desirable at present, for the school only to have the practice of the Asylum during the season of lectures.

Again: it has been said that the infant state of the Medical School and Alms House do not call for this union or connexion. The reply, in sentiment, of Dr. Johnson to Chesterfield, when the dedication of his Dictionary was

sought, may be happily referred to here. It is in the comparatively helpless and friendless eras of these institutions that impulse is so important. When advanced into the maturity of vigorous existence, they progress in the noble work of science and benevolence unshackled, unopposed. It is then that they reflect on their early struggles and mutual support, with that pleasure which the retrospect of surmounted difficulties conveys; and if the Guardians of the Poor should live to see the plan for their medical police in full operation, as it is proposed by me, I do not fear that any reflections will arise calculated to mar their retrospect, or impeach their judgment. And why? Because it is the plan which originated in a regard for the interests of medical science, for the benefit of benevolent institutions; it has been universally sanctioned in the usages of Europe and America, and it remains for the consideration of the Guardians of the Washington Asylum, whether they will remain an exception to this system.

To the personal objections, to the prejudices, and to the misrepresentations which various sources and motives have given rise to, and directed against me, I give no heed. Truth and enlightened action, in this case, will ultimately prevail. I quote the words of Sydenham: "It is not acting the part of a *good* man to convert to private advantage what might prove serviceable to the public; nor of a *wise* man, to deprive himself of the blessing he might justly expect from Heaven, by endeavoring to promote the public good;" and I apply these words to any who, on a full knowledge of the principles and conduct I have pursued, impugn my motives.

It has been distinctly avowed in the organization of the most splendid monument of public and private munificence ever established in America, the Massachusetts Medical

Hospital, that hospitals and alms houses should be appropriated to two purposes ; the one the comfort and protection of the sick ; the other the promotion of medical instruction. This principle I have shewn to be universally acted on ; and it is to this principle that the attention of the Guardians of the Poor is earnestly invited. There is not an institution in America where the Professors hold a *subordinate* station, or one at the pleasure of a *medical director*. It is therefore that I deprecate the idea of a precedent, which may derogate from the respect due to a Professor's chair. That station is surrounded with difficulties which I forbear to enumerate ; and when a facility is requested on the principles announced above, it is hoped there is no violation of justice or delicacy on the part of him who seeks it, nor will there be of duty on the part of those who confer it.

The result of this extension of privilege to the Medical Professors will be most honorable to the Guardians of the Poor. They will soon perceive the difference between a plan which exists, so far as the medical profession is concerned, for the pecuniary benefit of an individual, and one adapted to the good of a public institution—a Medical School. They will see a library rapidly gathering ; the situation of resident student eagerly sought after and well paid for ; they will be enabled to enlarge their accommodations for the sick of the City ; they will see their wards thronged with medical students, and themselves rewarded with the gratitude of those who are the beneficiaries of their liberal policy.

As it is, obligations are acknowledged to one who has been largely and liberally paid for his services ; whose claims, on his own principles, will grow as the period of his services is prolonged ; and thus the general interests removed farther from consummation, while the fetters of

individual claim are more firmly rivetted. I mean no disrespect to Dr. McWilliams. On the principles of this exposition we differ widely, but I trust not personally. I have always esteemed him as a man and a physician, and will never forfeit his respect, unless I do so by adhering to, and declaring, opinions in which neither his nor my individual interests are consulted, but reference is had to the public good.

THOMAS HENDERSON.

WASHINGTON, August 14, 1827.

MEMORIAL.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives
of the United States in Congress assembled :*

Whereas a memorial has been presented to your honorable body, asking for the incorporation of a Medical College in the City of Washington ; and, inasmuch as there is already, in successful operation in this District, one respectable institution of that character :

We, the undersigned, physicians and citizens of said District, desiring that the injurious effects of rivalry and division in the early periods of medical instruction, experienced repeatedly in other parts of our country, may not create the same embarrassments here ; and, moreover, impressed with the belief that the institution at present existing is fully adequate to the exigencies of the profession and community, do humbly pray that another Medical College may not be incorporated.

Peregrine Warfield, M. D.
Charles Worthington, M. D.
Thomas Semmes, M. D.
Edward Fitzhugh, M. D.
William Washington, M. D.
Doctor John Richards,
Nathaniel P. Causin, M. D.

George W. May, M. D.
Alexander McWilliams, M. D.
Doctor Charles B. Hamilton,
Doctor Richmond Johnson,
Doctor Joel T. Gustine,
Doctor James Ewell.

Joseph Pearson,
 Walter Jones,
 Daniel Carroll of Dudn.
 William Brent,
 B. Thruston,
 Joseph Gales, Jr.
 Thomas Law,
 Abraham Bradley,
 Archibald Henderson,
 William W. Seaton,
 Richard B. Lee,
 Phineas Bradley,
 Charles Bulfinch,
 Edmund Law,
 Thomas L. Thruston,
 Andrew Ramsay,
 Peter Force,
 Samuel W. Lind,
 Reuben Post,
 William A. Bradley,
 John S. Meehan,
 William Ramsay,
 J. H. Houston,
 D. A. Hall,
 Robert Little,
 Richard Wallach,
 Andw. T. McCormick,
 William B. Digges,
 T. P. Andrews,
 J. Gideon, Jr.
 James Laurie,
 Andrew Way,
 John Laird,
 Thomas Peter,
 John Mason,
 John Cox,
 Clement Smith,
 Walter Smith,
 F. S. Key,
 Richard S. Coxe,
 Edward Jones,
 Clement Cox,
 J. S. Haw,
 J. I. Stull,

Jer. W. Bronaugh,
 Samuel McKenney,
 David English,
 Thomas L. McKenney,
 Henry Waring,
 Stephen B. Balch,
 Daniel Kurtz,
 William A. Rind,
 Samuel J. Potts,
 Anthony Addison,
 John Threlkeld,
 William Stewart,
 William M. Worthington,
 William M. Stewart,
 William G. Ridgely,
 William Cranch,
 John Roberts,
 Robert J. Taylor,
 Thompson F. Mason,
 Edward Stabler,
 Henry Daingerfield,
 William Fowle,
 Hugh Smith,
 T. Smith,
 William C. Gardiner,
 Charles J. Cazenove,
 Jonah Thomson,
 Charles Bennet,
 J. L. McKenna,
 John Popham,
 Ed. I. Lee,
 C. P. Thompson,
 J. P. Thompson,
 Phin. Janney,
 P. R. Fendall,
 Charles J. Catlett,
 C. W. Neale,
 Bern. Hooe,
 E. Harrison,
 W. Andrews,
 S. Cornelius,
 Thomas Vowell,
 John C. Vowell,
 N. S. Wise.